



**Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Southern District of Texas**

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THREE CONVICTED IN EMAIL SCAM PROMISING RICHES

HOUSTON, TX – Nigerian nationals Samuel Obioha Okafor, 33, and Omizuomeraan Stephen Ejomah, 28, and Darsh Dior Pillow, a U.S. citizen, 21, all residing in Houston at an apartment on the 12600 block of Brookglade, were convicted of conspiracy to commit mail fraud through an email fraud scheme. United States Attorney Don DeGabrielle announced today that at a hearing before United States District Judge Keith P. Ellison, held on May 19, 2006, all three men pleaded guilty to the federal felony charge, and face a maximum punishment of five (5) years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. The court may also enter an order for restitution to be paid to the victims of the scheme. Okafor and Ejomah also face possible deportation following the completion of any prison sentence imposed by the court. Sentencing is scheduled for August 11, 2006, at 1:30pm.

At Friday's re-arraignment hearing, the United States presented evidence establishing the guilt of each defendant obtained during the course of an investigation conducted by the United States Postal Inspection Service. According to the evidence, a victim of the email scam, a retiree living in Lodi, California, received emails from individuals asking him to allow them to deposit a large amount of money into his bank account. In exchange, the victim was promised \$20 million. Between June 2005 through March of 2006, the victim sent the people who contacted him a total of \$140,000 for purported shipping, taxes and other fees associated with the transfer of the money.

In March 2006, the victim was out of money, and was unable to meet the request for additional sums requested. On March 7, 2006, the conspirators then used stolen bank account information to transfer approximately \$42,200 from a Chase Bank account to the victim's account. The victim then withdrew that money and sent a package containing \$42,900 in cash to an apartment in Houston located on the 14500 block of Beechnut.

The victim's wife discovered her husband's involvement in the scheme and confronted him. The victim attempted suicide and was hospitalized for several days. The victim's wife contacted the police, who, in turn, contacted United States Postal Inspectors in Houston. The package was intercepted and the cash removed. On March 15, 2006, Omizuomeraan Ejomah, Samuel Okafor and Darsh Pillow traveled together in one vehicle to a post office in Houston to retrieve the package. Postal Inspectors arrested the three men in a nearby parking lot. The package was in their car.

Postal Inspectors searched the apartment shared by the three and found the telephone that the victim had called to contact the conspirators, emails showing correspondence with the victim and others about the victim, and numerous handwritten documents containing the personal identity and bank account information of others. These items are typical of those used in “advanced fee” scammer. “Advanced fee” scams refer to email scams in which the email recipient is offered large sums of money to use their bank accounts to transfer even larger sums of money from foreign countries. However, as later emails indicate, “advanced fees” are requested to affect the transfer. In actuality, no huge sum of money in a foreign bank account exists, and the advanced fees are effectively stolen from the email recipient.

Ejomah admitted to Postal Inspectors he had been the one to arrange the transfer of the more than \$42,200 from the Chase Bank account to the victim’s account, without the consent of the Chase Bank account holder. All three men admitted participating in this scam.

This case was investigated by inspectors from the United States Postal Inspection Service and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Jay Hileman.

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